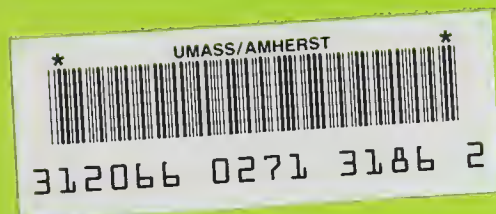


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# A GUIDE TO EVALUATION CONTRACTING FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN MASSACHUSETTS



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## PREFACE

The Program Evaluation Committee of the Massachusetts Department of Education has prepared this guide for school districts in Massachusetts. The Program Evaluation Committee is an ad-hoc committee of the Department made up of personnel from all major program units. The Committee was created to improve program evaluation activities at both the state and local levels. Preparing this guide is one part of the Committee's effort to be of assistance to local school districts.

Several school districts and consulting firms provided special advice and assistance in the process of producing this guide. They took a special interest in the project. Our thanks for sharing expertise and time go to:

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The members of the Program Evaluation Committee hope this guide will be useful to school districts. Please feel free to contact any of us with comments or suggestions about our work. We are:

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## INTRODUCTION

Program evaluation is an essential part of every school manager's job. Its intended purpose is to provide dependable information about the performance of educational products, practices and programs. Decision makers can then use this information, along with other data, to improve the quality of education being offered in schools.

The Massachusetts Department of Education recognizes the importance of evaluation as part of the school district's own program planning operation. A district may have an evaluation specialist or other staff person to conduct most of the evaluations the district needs. However, sometimes the school district will not have the in-house expertise to conduct the evaluation it requires. Other times the school district will determine it should not conduct an evaluation in-house.

This guide has been written to assist the local school district in those cases where an outside contractor is hired to conduct an evaluation. The guide is written specifically for the evaluation manager, the person responsible for having the evaluation conducted. It presents the steps a manager should follow to assure retrieving the information desired from the evaluation. It is not a guide on how to be an evaluator and conduct the evaluation. Its focus is on what procedures to use when working with the contractor. Many sample documents are included for references.

### Organization of the Guide

Section I presents some factors to consider when deciding whether to conduct an evaluation internally or externally. Section II describes the process of hiring an external evaluator for a large contract, \$10,000 or more, where a Request for Proposal (RFP) is let and a contract is awarded. This section of the guide goes into detail on the steps of writing the RFP, selecting the evaluator, negotiating the contract and monitoring the contract. Section III of the guide describes hiring an external evaluator for a small contract, under \$10,000. This section describes topics similar to those in Section II, but gives special information regarding contracts less than \$2,000.

The definition of small and large evaluations is a general guideline. In practice a district may select amongst the processes discussed under each, as the particular evaluation warrants.

### Evaluation Standards

Included in the guide for general reference in conducting all types of evaluation studies is a set of evaluation standards. The Massachusetts Department of Education has adapted these standards from a set of nationally developed standards. School districts are encouraged to use these standards whenever possible and appropriate in all evaluation efforts. This guide will not examine them in great detail, but it will refer to them in the text of the guide when they apply. The standards are found in Appendix A.

This guide is only one step in assisting local school districts to improve their evaluation efforts. Many other issues in evaluation are not addressed. We welcome the comments and reactions of those who use this guide with suggestions for additions, deletions or revisions.





## **I. DECIDING ON AN EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL EVALUATION: THE MANAGER'S DECISION**

School districts conduct evaluations in the following ways:

Internally, by qualified evaluation specialists in the district, or by staff of the program being evaluated.

Externally, by independent evaluators chosen by the school district on the basis of known work or on the basis of a competitive open bid process, i.e., the request for proposal process. An external evaluator may be a single individual or an established firm.

When the program evaluation is not legally mandated from funding sources to be either internal or external, a program manager must make that decision. Several factors should be taken into account:

- cost
- credibility and objectivity
- availability of qualified personnel
- rapport with program personnel

### **Cost**

Using an outside evaluator requires designating budget funds which sometimes “seems” more expensive than doing an evaluation in-house or internally. It may actually be more expensive if there are unusually high communication, travel or overhead costs. Is the school manager able to justify the costs and gain approval for this expenditure in time for the evaluation to be conducted when needed?

### **Credibility and Objectivity**

Evaluations need to be conducted so that the results are believable by school district staff and outside observers. When an evaluation has major policy implications for a program, credibility and objectivity are especially important. An external evaluator may be best since an internal evaluator may be perceived as having a conflict of interest. The external evaluator is an independent agent. However, it is possible that in a particular evaluation the internal evaluator may be more credible than available external evaluators.

### **Availability of Qualified Personnel**

If a school district does not have a qualified evaluator, then in the ideal case the district must hire a qualified external evaluator. Hiring an outside evaluator allows the district to have access to persons skilled in areas beyond the capacities of district personnel. It can, however, be difficult to determine the competence of an outside evaluator at times, particularly if the evaluator is unknown to district staff. Even if a school district has a qualified evaluator in the district (either a district-wide evaluator or a project administrator or teacher), this person may or may not be free to give the evaluation its due time and energy because of other responsibilities. Evaluations are time consuming. The evaluation may divert the project person's time and energy when it is more important for the person to concentrate on the day-to-day operation of the program.

### **Rapport with Program Personnel**

Evaluators establish a working relationship with program personnel in the course of conducting the evaluation. If that relationship is an open one, with frequent communication and the evaluator is familiar with the project being evaluated, it is more likely that the evaluation will be on target and the results of the evaluation will be implemented. For a particular evaluation, a school district must decide how important this rapport is for the success of the evaluation and whether an external or internal evaluator will produce the best results.

## II. CONDUCTING A LARGE EXTERNAL EVALUATION USING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

For a large evaluation, \$10,000 or more, a school district would most likely issue an RFP to solicit bids from prospective contractors.

### Writing and Advertising the Request for Proposals

#### *General Information*

An RFP is a notice sent to prospective contractors informing them of an evaluation that a district intends to sponsor. The purpose of issuing an RFP is to identify the best possible approach and contractor for conducting the evaluation. This is usually accomplished by a competitive bidding process.

The local school district issues an RFP specifying tasks to be accomplished. Contractors then submit proposals, which are plans for how they would do the work outlined in the RFP and what they would charge. Then, the agency reviews the proposals and selects the best qualified lowest bidder for meeting the tasks of the particular evaluation project.

#### *Steps in Writing an RFP*

Clearly state the purposes of the evaluation, the type of evaluation desired, the questions to be answered, how and when the results will be reported, and what resources are available to conduct the evaluation.

The evaluation manager should involve other people in a discussion of these issues before writing an RFP. After agreement has been reached on these issues, below are the steps to follow when writing the RFP.

1. Answer the RFP questions carefully and completely in writing. This is the most important step in the whole process and will clarify the information you want from the evaluation.

What programs and/or students will be evaluated?

What questions about the students and/or program will the evaluation address?

What instruments or alternative methods of collecting information will be used?

If no specific instruments or methods are identified:

What general types of instruments will be selected?

How will the instruments or alternative methods be selected or developed?

What are the qualifications of the evaluator?

If the evaluator is not identified, what process will be used to select an evaluator?

What are the dates for collecting the data and other necessary information for the evaluation?

When will interim and final written reports be submitted?

How much money or resources are allocated for the evaluation?

How will the results of this evaluation be used?

Who will receive copies of the evaluation?

2. Outline the RFP. Develop an outline using the sample RFP format at the end of this section. Check your outline to make sure that there is a place to include all of the information from above. Basically, your outline will start with more general information about the project or program to be evaluated. Then, it will be moved toward the specifics required for this particular evaluation.
3. Standard information that is basically the same for all RFPs is provided in the sample. This includes information on contracting, submitting bids, printing requirements, and the proposal review process. It is unnecessary to change these sections each time you write an RFP. Use whatever you can from the sample, making only those changes necessary for your particular situation.

Be sure, as part of the proposal review section, to specify the components of the proposal to be reviewed and the number of points to be awarded for each component (See page 8). Then, both proposal reviewers and potential contractors will know on what basis they will be judged.

4. Using your outline, the sample RFP format, and the answers to the questions from Step 1, you are ready to begin writing the RFP. The way to do this is to transfer the answers to the RFP Questions into the beginning writing



the RFP. The way to do this is to transfer the answers to the RFP Questions into the appropriate sections of the sample format.

5. After the RFP is drafted, do a rough budget estimate for the work you have described. In order to do this estimate, you could check other budgets for similar evaluations already completed from persons in or out of your school district as well as your school district budget personnel. Include major costs, such as evaluator time and large numbers of printed materials. The purpose of this is not to develop a budget that will actually be used. The purpose is to check to make sure that the tasks required can reasonably be done for the amount of money available. If your cost estimates are much higher than the money available, you may need to rethink what you are requesting in the RFP.
6. After a draft of the RFP is written, it is helpful to circulate it to others for their reactions and comments. Other people can often help point out when a section is unclear, or when additional information is needed. At the very least, other staff members involved in the project should review the RFP. You may also want to have a technical consultant who will not be a bidder review the RFP, particularly if there are complex technical issues. Depending upon the amount of time available, you may also wish to have the draft RFP reviewed by members of any panel who will assist you in screening proposals. (See Political Viability Standard page 40).
7. After reviewing all of these comments, make any necessary revisions in your draft. The RFP is now complete.

#### *Do's and Don'ts for Writing an RFP*

DO issue the RFP with enough lead time so that prospective contractors can do a good job with the proposal.

Do be precise about the end results of the evaluation. State clearly what you want to know, how precise the results must be, and how the results are to be reported.

DO indicate the amount of money available for conducting the evaluation.

DO list clearly the products that will result from the contract. Include a description of each item, number of copies required, and date required.

DO specify any dates for which the contractor's presence is required (such as school committee meetings), as well as a list of crucial dates for the project.

DO specify clearly who has responsibility (contractor or district) for costs of mailing, duplicating materials, contracting participants, paying for travel and meals for participants, etc.

DO provide complete information on what criteria will be used when you review the RFP and how the review process will be conducted.

DO include background information on the project.

DO specify any format and/or content requirements for the budget.

DO include an evaluation design, if one has already been selected.

DON'T provide details on how the contractor should go about accomplishing the task; that is the job of the bidder. Different contractors will propose different ways to get the job done. As long as you have been clear about what the job is, you will be able to compare the approaches and costs proposed by different bidders and select the one that you think is the best.

DON'T be too general and ambiguous.

DON'T omit key issues you want to see addressed in the proposals.

DON'T use jargon.

DON'T expect a large response for a small RFP.

DON'T establish unrealistic time or budgetary constraints for the tasks required.

REMEMBER: IT IS IN YOUR BEST INTEREST FOR BIDDERS TO KNOW WHAT YOU NEED. TELL CONTRACTORS WHAT YOU WANT AND YOU STAND A MUCH BETTER CHANCE OF GETTING IT.

### *Sample RFP Form*

A sample form is provided at the end of this Section.

The nature of the task, the amount of money available, and the complexity of what is required will affect how the RFP should be written. *This is only one suggested format.* Other formats may work equally well, as long as all necessary information is provided. If you have never written an RFP before, you may want to start out with this format and modify it as you go along. Once you have developed your own format, you can use that as a guideline in developing future RFPs.

### *Ways to Advertise*

There are two ways to advertise an RFP. You may wish to use one or both of these methods. In any case, an RFP is public information and must be distributed widely.

First, you may announce the availability of an RFP through the mail (to a list of potential bidders) or through a newspaper advertisement. The announcement should include, at a minimum, the following information:

- A heading titled "Request for Proposals".
- The name of the unit in the school district issuing the RFP.
- The intent of the request, the desired program and/or products to be evaluated and intended recipients of the evaluation.
- Identification of a contact person with directions for obtaining further information.
- The amount of money available.
- The deadline date for submission of final proposals.

Second, you may identify a list of potential bidders and send the RFP out directly. If you do not send out an announcement, make sure that you send the RFP to a reasonable number of potential bidders. Be sure to give new firms and minority firms a fair chance to bid.

Since mailing and printing costs should be kept to a minimum, an announcement of the RFP to potential bidders is recommended prior to sending out the complete RFP. Then, after a written Intent to Bid is received, accompanying materials can be duplicated and mailed.

Document all procedures followed in advertising the RFP. This information will be needed to develop and process the resulting contract.

### *Public Information Requirements*

Massachusetts has a far-reaching public records law. Anyone has the right to see and have a copy of almost any written document made or received by any public agency, including a school district. To comply with the public records law and to be fair to all potential bidders, you should note the following:

An RFP is public information. Make the RFP available to anyone who specifically requests a copy.

Maintain documentation of any advertisement and bidders list used for distributing the RFP.

The RFP should include clear deadlines for submission of bids and written intention to bid, as well as any dates after which requests for information will not be honored. It is essential that you strictly observe these deadlines. If you change any deadlines, make sure everyone gets the new information at the same time.

If bidders are required to submit a written Intent to Bid, the names of those submitting such letters are public information.

Make yourself equally available to all potential bidders for answering questions and providing information. Any of the methods stated below are fine as long as the method is stated in the RFP itself.



## Selecting the Evaluator

### Proposal Review Process

(See Evaluator Credibility Standard page 39 and Conflict of Interest Standard page 41.)

#### *General Information*

Procedures for reviewing proposals and selecting an evaluator should be established and included in the RFP. The review procedures should include information on:

- What groups or committees will review proposals.
- The elements that will be considered in reviewing proposals, including the maximum possible points that a proposal may receive for each element.
- You can hold a public bidders' meeting at which time questions about the RFP can be answered. Such a meeting should be publicly advertised and open to all interested parties.
- You can also be available to answer telephone inquiries about the RFP. In this case, you should keep a log of all telephone calls. Items to be recorded in a log include: the name and firm of a person requesting information; address, date, and nature of the request; and the date and nature of the response. This log must be available for public inspection.
- If telephone calls will not be accepted, the RFP should state that interested applicants seeking further information should submit inquiries in writing. All written requests for information and written responses are public information.

Until the deadline for submission of proposals, the bids (proposals) submitted are not public information. However, once the bid deadline is passed, all bids received become public information, even if the proposal contains a statement to the contrary.

Materials used in the review of proposals should be kept confidential during the review process. However, once a decision has been made to enter into negotiations with a bidder or award a contract, all records of the review process may no longer be kept confidential; they become public information.

You can require that someone requesting a copy of a public document pay for the cost of duplicating the material. The person making the request can send you a check made out directly to a photocopy place. You can then have the copy made and pass on the check directly to the photocopier.

If you wish to have the person requesting the material pay mailing costs, have them send you a stamped, self-addressed envelope (specify size of envelope and amount of postage required).

**The pertinent section of the Public Records Law is cited here from the General Laws Chapter 4, Section 7(26):**

"Public Records"-Twenty-sixth, "Public records" shall mean all books, papers, maps, photographs, recorded tapes, financial statements, statistical tabulations, or other documentary materials or data, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any officer or employee of any agency, executive office, department board, commission, bureau, division or authority of the Commonwealth, or of any political subdivision thereof, or of any authority established by the general court to serve a public purpose, unless such materials or data fall within the following exemptions in that they are:

- (h) proposals and bids to enter into any contract or agreement until the time for the opening of bids in the case of proposals or bids to be opened publicly, and until the time for the receipt of bids or proposals has expired in all other cases; and inter-agency or intra-agency communications made in connection with an evaluation process for reviewing bids or proposals, prior to a decision to enter into negotiations with or to award a contract to, a particular person.



It is unlikely that a proposal will be outstanding or seriously deficient in everything. The review process should highlight the relative merits and problems of each proposal.

Points can be awarded for such categories as:

- Quality of products and activities.
- Costs in relation to products.
- Thoroughness, adequacy, and clarity of budget.
- Responsiveness to the questions posed in the RFP.
- Quality of the management plan.
- Qualifications and time allocations of project staff.
- Contractor's resources and relevant experience in evaluation.
- Creativity of the proposal.

These are only examples. Depending upon the purposes of the RFP, you may wish to add or delete certain categories, separate some categories into two, or combine some categories.

The way points are distributed depends upon the purposes of the study and how you choose to weigh the different components of proposals. If, for instance, the project involves test development and data analysis, you probably would award fewer points for creativity, since creativity is not relevant. In fact, you may eliminate the whole category. If you will be looking for specific characteristics (such as evidence of effective work with advisory groups), then you should specify that and designate a certain number of points for that category.

It is important to specify ahead of time (for inclusion in the RFP) the components of the proposal to be reviewed and the number of points to be awarded for each component. Then, both proposal reviewers and potential contractors will know on what basis they will be judged.

### *Steps in Proposal Review Process*

Once the methods and content of proposal review have been established, follow these steps:

1. Organize an ad hoc committee to review proposals. This committee should always include staff from the unit that sent out the RFP. You may also want to include representatives from other units and state or local associations who would have an interest in the evaluation findings. The size of a review committee may range from about 6 to 12 people, although this number is only a guideline. If non-district reviewers are sitting on the committee, it should be made clear that their recommendations will be taken seriously, but that the final decision must be made by district staff and/or the school committee.
2. Get technical assistance if necessary. In addition to a review by district staff and other interested parties, you may also need outside technical assistance. This would be appropriate if the size of the contract is large, if there are technical issues unfamiliar to district staff, or if political challenges to the evaluation are likely. The task of the technical expert is to review proposals and write up a critique of each proposal. These critiques should then be shared with district staff and with the various contractors and help school district staff identify necessary amendments to the winning proposal.

Technical experts can be people who have the necessary knowledge of the subject and of the type of evaluation. (For instance, if a complex sampling plan is to be used, you would want to find someone knowledgeable about sampling.) Make sure that the skills of your technical expert are appropriate to the specific task. If outside technical consultants are used to advise on the quality of proposals, make certain that no conflict of interest exists. Obviously, someone serving as a technical consultant could not also be a bidder. Nor should a technical consultant be associated in any way with a bidding consultant firm.

(See Practical Procedures Standard page 40 for further considerations.)

3. Arrange for a time and location for a meeting to review the proposals and interview finalists. Send out necessary materials to the review committee. Committee members should receive:
  - RFP and accompanying materials sent to potential bidders.

- Proposals. (Make sure you require bidders to submit enough copies for all members of the review committee, plus what you will need for processing and monitoring the contract.)
  - Directions for reviewing proposals.
  - Rating forms (one for each proposal).
  - Any critiques or comments written by technical consultants.
4. Narrow down prospective bidders. When proposals are received, staff should quickly review them (using criteria specified in the RFP) to see if any are extremely weak and should not be pursued. This decision may be made by school district staff, or you may wish to poll members of the review committee by telephone to get their recommendations about which proposals merit further consideration. Once you determine which bidders to interview, you can schedule the interviews with bidders.
  5. Plan the agenda for the proposal review meeting. Contractors should send one or two key people to the interview. The same amount of time should be allocated for each interview. The amount of time allocated will depend upon the number of bidders you wish to interview and the length of time the review committee will meet. Generally, an hour or more should be scheduled for each interview.

Prior to the first interview, schedule an hour or so for review panel members and technical consultants (if any) to discuss the types of questions that need to be raised with the bidders.

6. Interview bidders. The evaluation manager for the contracting unit should chair this session. Careful notes should be kept during the interviews. Since the bidders know they are in final competition for the contract at the time of the interview, you are in a good position to gain favorable clarifications of anything that is unclear in the proposal. Bidders should be told that they will be held to anything they say during the interview. Verbal agreements should then be written as an amendment to the proposal of the successful bidder (See page 9 Negotiating a Contract).

After all contractors have been interviewed, review panel members should discuss their reactions, focusing on perceived strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. After this discussion, panel members should revise the review sheets completed prior to the interview on the basis of what they learned from the session. Each member should then make a recommendation and give reasons for the selection.

7. Select a proposed contractor. Based on the recommendations of outside reviewers, technical consultants, and staff, a winning proposal should be tentatively identified.
8. Notify successful and unsuccessful bidders.

### *Sample Proposal Review Sheet*

An example of a proposal review sheet is attached here. It lists the different elements of the proposal which will be considered in its review. In addition, the maximum number of points that may be awarded is specified for each element. Reviewers have a place to indicate their initial score (prior to interviewing the bidder), as well as their final score (following the interview and/or discussion with other committee members).

Remember that this is only an example. Each RFP needs to specify the elements that will be considered in reviewing proposals, as well as the point distribution. This will vary from RFP to RFP. In setting up the review process, you need to identify those elements of proposals that will be of most importance for each situation.

Make sure to collect all review forms and keep them as part of your documentation of the selection process. Losing bidders may ask to see the review forms to improve their chances of being awarded a contract in the future.



## SAMPLE PROPOSAL REVIEW SHEET

RFP Title: \_\_\_\_\_ RFP #: \_\_\_\_\_

Bidder: \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS TO REVIEWERS:** Reread the RFP, and note the elements of the proposal for which points will be awarded (see below). Then, carefully review each proposal and indicate your initial point allocation. Following the interview of bidders and/or discussion with other reviewers, indicate your final ratings for each proposal. Add any comments at the bottom of the page. Complete one Review Sheet for each proposal that you are reviewing. Ratings will be available for public review by contractors and other interested parties upon request.

Element of Proposal	Possible Points	Points Awarded	
		Initial Review	Final Review
1. Objectives—Are they clearly stated and appropriate for the RFP?	15		
2. Activities—Are they related to the objectives and fulfill all requirements of the RFP?	25		
3. Qualifications of proposed staff—Do they have the training and experience pertinent to the project?	25		
4. Management Plan—Is the project-time plan clearly presented with appropriate personnel allocated to each activity?	20		
5. Budget—Is the budget clear and realistic?	15		
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>		

Comments:

## **Negotiating a Contract**

Certain kinds of negotiations are acceptable, and others are not. Changes should not be made in the scope of work or outcomes described in the RFP. However, it is acceptable to negotiate changes with a bidder about how the work tasks will be carried out. During the interview, bidders will usually indicate the extent of changes they are willing to make in their proposal.

After the initial identification of the successful bidder, the review panel and technical experts should turn their attention to necessary modifications to the selected proposal. For example, the review panel might suggest changes in the sampling procedures, hypotheses to be tested, or budget allocations. Reviewers should keep budgetary constraints in mind when requesting amendments. Again, very careful minutes of changes requested should be kept.

Based on the notes of the review committee meeting, as well as a review of the tasks required by the RFP, the school district evaluation manager should write a formal Request for Amendment to the winning bidder. This can be in the form of a letter or memorandum. In addition, the evaluation manager will probably want to meet with the bidder to review the amendments required. The bidder then submits a memorandum amending the original proposal. Both the Request for Amendment and the amendment memorandum become part of the formal contractual obligation of the bidder.

Remember that a Contract Management Plan will be written to detail and refine the proposal work (see page 11). Be sure proposal changes are actually new or different items.

When you notify the winning bidder, the notice must make it clear that this selection does not constitute formal approval of the contract. No individual employee of a district may formally award a contract or authorize work to begin without official school committee approval. It is especially important, therefore, that adequate time is allowed for this final approval, so that the contract work can proceed on schedule.

## **Monitoring and Evaluating the Evaluation Contract**

### **Monitoring Procedures**

Monitoring an evaluation contract is an essential part of the evaluation manager's job. No outside evaluator should be hired to complete the job without careful monitoring by the evaluation manager. Monitoring does not mean getting involved with the details and day-to-day activities of carrying out the evaluation. However, the evaluation manager must keep track of progress, approve of key decisions, and make sure that crucial deadlines are met.

There are four vehicles for effective monitoring of an evaluation contract.

- a. The best monitoring tool is a good contract (including the RFP, Proposal, Request for Amendment Letter and Proposal Amendment), and the most important part for monitoring is a good RFP. If the RFP is clear and specific about the tasks to be accomplished, the amount of money available, the materials to be produced, how materials will be distributed, meeting dates for which the evaluator's presence is required, how money will be spent and reallocated if necessary, and specific dates for completion of major project tasks, half the work of monitoring a contract is done. What the evaluation manager needs to do is to refer frequently to the RFP to ensure that tasks are being accomplished as specified.
- b. After a contract has been awarded, the first thing the contractor should do is prepare a detailed Contract Management Plan. (See sample page 11). The plan should list specific dates, tasks, and responsibilities for accomplishing the tasks required by the project and outlined in the RFP and proposal. It is a sequential, operational plan that grows out of the RFP and the proposal, as well as any amendments. The Plan should be submitted in draft form to the evaluation manager, and may also be reviewed by appropriate advisory committees. It is essential that the plan be reviewed very carefully for completeness and accuracy. Time and care spent at this crucial stage will make monitoring of the contract much easier during the entire contract period.



After the evaluation manager has scrutinized the Contract Management Plan and gotten comments from others, changes should be given to the contractor, who should then submit a revised management plan document. This plan becomes the schedule for carrying out the evaluation. The evaluation manager can then simply check to make sure that necessary tasks are being accomplished by the specified dates.

- c. No matter how carefully the RFP and Contract Management Plan are developed, reviewed, and revised, there will almost always be some changes along the way. All prepared changes should be reviewed, agreed upon by both parties and documented.

The contractor should send memos confirming any agreed upon changes. Changes could be in the specific way tasks will be carried out, trade-offs (more copies of a report, but fewer pages than planned), types of analysis to be conducted, etc. It is especially important to document any changes which affect the budget. The evaluation manager should carefully review memos on changes and make necessary corrections immediately.

- d. In general, school district staff should review all draft materials produced by the contractor before printing and distribution. The review should be limited to factual information, completeness or clarity. Materials included in this category are : questionnaires; letters to parents, teachers or students; workshop materials; final reports; any other printed materials. Remember it is unethical to ask a contractor to change results or to omit important findings.

In rare instances, an evaluator is hired to make an independent judgment about an issue and submit a report to the district. In these cases, the contractor would retain complete control over the contents of the report and the district would not review materials. The RFP would state who has control over the content of the report.

Prior to processing final payment, the evaluation manager should carefully review all project documents (RFP, Proposal, Amendment Request, Proposal Amendment, documentation memos). Final payment should not be processed until all materials are received and all tasks completed as specified in the project documents.

### **The Contract Management Plan**

On the following page is an excerpt from a Contract Management Plan for a program evaluation. Key dates are specified, along with essential evaluation project activities. In addition, those responsible for each activity are identified.

Certain activities in a program evaluation are ongoing, with a deadline date indicated. Others require meetings or telephone calls on specified dates.

The Plan is of mutual benefit. It spells out the obligations of both the contractor and the evaluation manager responsible for monitoring the contract. You are obligated to meet your responsibilities as much as the contractor is obligated to meet his/her responsibilities.

### **Evaluating the Contract**

A school district should develop a plan to evaluate the quality of evaluation contract work. This activity is important for a number of reasons:

- school districts must have some way of knowing the degree to which evaluation results are valid and reliable, and useful for making decisions about the future of programs evaluated;
- school districts should have a formal process for insuring that all work contracted for has been completed in the expected fashion;
- evaluation contractors should be given formal feedback on the degree to which the work which they have submitted has met the district's expectations, and subsequently the possibility of future contracts.

There are several options for accomplishing this task including independent review panels of evaluation "experts" and public hearings of the findings. A district must weigh, however, the costs both in dollars and personnel time involved to determine how elaborate a review is necessary. In many cases simply providing the mechanism for the



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Meeting between Evaluator and Project Staff will take place on the 2nd Tuesday of each month (October-June) unless another day is mutually agreed upon.

review in a letter or meeting will be enough to provide formal feedback to the contractor. The key elements in this feedback are:

- comparison of work expected or written in the contract compared with work received;
- comparison of contractor's work with appropriate Program Evaluation Standards, as developed by the Department of Education (Appendix A), which the contractor and school district have previously agreed upon as important.

### **Non-Compliance Procedures**

There are various levels at which a contract can be judged to be unsatisfactory. In general, the range of recourses available is related to the extent and type of non-compliance. When an evaluation service that is specifically contracted for is not delivered, the school district may withhold payment and instigate legal action. On the other hand, if the evaluation is judged inadequate in terms of quality, there are fewer options for recourse. Even when qualitative criteria have been specified in the contract, it may be difficult to establish inadequacies because of the subjective nature of qualitative judgments. In these cases, an effective course of action is relying upon the contractor's value of a good reputation and opportunity for future employment. Below are various strategies, listed in terms of severity. These steps may also be regarded as sequential, i.e., a series of actions that may be followed to final resolution of the case.

1. *Informal letter of inquiry.*

As a first step, an informal letter may be sent to the contractor requesting further material, refinement, clarification, modification, etc. This will allow the contractor to explain circumstances that may relate to performance and will afford the opportunity to remedy defects.

2. *Formal meeting of all parties.*

A meeting with the head of the contractor's company, his staff working on the evaluation and school district staff could be called to resolve the problems.

3. *Formal letter of complaint with a copy to the Department.*

This letter can serve two purposes. It can formally detail the inadequacies in the evaluation, in preparation for future legal action. It can also help to ensure that the relative reliability of a contractor is more generally known. Contractors who value their good name are likely to rectify inadequacies without further action on the part of the district. It is important for the educational community to be aware of unsatisfactory performance on the part of the contractor. Any allegations of incompetence or wrong doing must be carefully documented.

4. *Negotiated settlements of payment.*

A contract is not one-sided; both parties must live up to their contractual obligations. For this reason, contracts should specify that final payment be withheld until the satisfactory completion of the proposed work. It is also useful to include within the contract a stipulation that it may be terminated for non-performance or inadequate performance at any time. In the event of such termination, it is noted that compensation be adjusted to the percentage of performance completed.

Before deciding on such a course of action, legal advice should be sought. The strength of the school district's case is contingent upon how well it can document incompetency. Ideally, the contract should include an explicit criteria for performance. In this case, non-compliance is most easily documented. However, inadequacies in terms of unspecified criteria can be challenged provided the work has not been accepted previously. Since acceptance implies tacit approval, it follows that contracts should be monitored carefully, the contractor should be made aware of expectations, and objections should be made promptly when inadequate performance occurs.

(See Accuracy Standards page 42 and Formal Obligation Standard page 41 for additional information)

[illegible]

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**Title:** Evaluation of the Pre-School Language Development Program

**Date Issued:** May 15, 1982

For: School Board of Cosmopolis

Bureau/Division/Office: Division of Research

Address: 108 Main Street

**Available Funds: \$30,000.00**

RFP Contact Name: Dr. John Lee

Address: Division of Research

School Department, 108 Main Street, Cosmopolis, MA

Telephone: (617) 123-4567

Due Date: June 10, 1982

Location: Division of Research

Time: 5:00 P.M.

Number of copies to be submitted: 6

(Upon receipt, proposals become the property of the District and will not be returned to the bidder.)

**Written Intent to Bid Required? (If yes, only those submitting written intent will be notified of amendments and sent any supplementary materials.)**

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes, must be received by \_\_\_\_\_



The period of services will begin with contract authorization, which is estimated to be **July 1, 1982** and concluded no later than **August 30, 1984**

Further information about this RFP may be obtained in the following way(s):

**SAMPLE • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe • SAMPLe •**

This a formal request for the submission of proposals to assist the Cosmopolis School Department in evaluating... The Pre-School Language Development Program.

Specifically, proposals are invited to: assist the Division of Research in evaluating the impact of the program on teachers and students in 6 Cosmopolis kindergarten classes.

- design of a study which will investigate the extent of implementation of the project over a 2-year period.
- implementation of a full-scale assessment program of pupil achievement in a sample of the 6 classes which are participants in the project
- preparation of two interim reports which will include an analysis of organizational factors that affect the efficiency of the project
- preparation of a final report which includes both quantitative and qualitative data in the evaluation of the project

While it is expected that the contractor will provide a detailed working schedule (Planning Document), the following schedule of critical activities should be noted (assuming a contract approval date of July 1, 1982):

Task	Completed by
Detailed planning document of activities, procedures and schedule	July 30, 1982
Interim Report	July 30, 1983
Final Report	August 31, 1984

## (B) Background

***This section should provide information about the project or program being evaluated, the relevant laws and/or regulations, and previous work the agency has done related to this project. Providing this background helps bidders understand the purpose and context for this evaluation. Any previous results and/or materials from previous evaluations should be cited in this section.***

The Pre-School Language Development Program (PLDP) is a two-year bilingual educational program that has been funded by Federal Grant No. K013 under the Bilingual Educational Act 93-70. Its purpose is to improve the English speaking and comprehension ability of children for whom English is not their native language.

The program will take place in 6 Cosmopolis elementary schools which report that at least 10% of their entry-level pupils do not speak English as a first language. It is open to all children residing in Cosmopolis who 1) will be eligible for kindergarten enrollment in September 1984 and 2) do not speak English as a first language. It is anticipated that approximately 150 pupils will be eligible.



During the 1982-83 school year, curriculum and materials for the program were developed by project staff who were appointed in October 1981. These rely heavily upon current research findings regarding interpersonal communication skills. This material will be used as the basis for instruction; however, it is anticipated that the evaluator will provide formative evaluation as the project develops and that the program will be modified accordingly.

Full description of the development process as well as a set of instructional materials are available at the offices of the Division of Research.

**All contractors must be familiar with and abide by those statutes and regulations dealing with conflict of interest, especially regarding state employees and those receiving salaries from state funds.**

No contractor may expend project funds until formal contract approval.

**A contract may be terminated fifteen working days after formal notification to the contractor. Settlement will be in accordance with state regulations.**

All contracts will include all clauses necessary for concurrence with all laws, policies and regulations of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

All materials produced by the contractor in order to fulfill the requirements of this proposal shall become the property of the District and be submitted to the Division of Research prior to final payment. Included shall be printer's negatives, masters, or flats used in printing final project products; computer data tapes; and all other project documents.

If the contractor proposes to employ a subcontractor(s), the qualifications of the subcontractor(s) shall be documented in the proposal at the same level of detail of those of the contractor. All subcontractors must be mutually agreeable to the District and the contractor.

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Contractor proposals will be reviewed by a panel composed of Division staff. Contractors whose proposals receive favorable reviews will be invited to send no more than two representatives to appear before the panel for a final proposal evaluation. This evaluation is scheduled for June 20, 1982.

● Clarity and relevance of objectives	15
● Revelance of proposed activities	25
● Qualifications of staff	25
● Management plan	20
● Budget	15

Contractors not receiving an award who wish to discuss their proposals with \_\_\_\_\_ following the award announcement. Feedback on proposal strengths and weaknesses will be provided at that time, and the winning proposal may be examined.

**The District reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to eliminate sections of a contractor's proposal as it deems desirable.**

It a contract ensues, the proposal of the successful bidder will become a contractual obligation along with any modifications made jointly by the District and the contractor. Failure of the successful bidder to accept this obligation will result in cancellation of the award.

Upon award of the contract, the contractor will meet with the staff of the District to discuss detailed plans and activities. Following this discussion the contractor will prepare a detailed Planning Document for use by the contractor, the District and others involved with the project.

Attached to all contractor proposals must be a completed Statement of Assurances, attached to this Request for Proposals. In addition, the contract awarded the successful bidder will include language consistent with Executive Order 11246, assuring equality of employment opportunity. All potential contractors, therefore, should familiarize themselves with this Order. Finally, a successful bidder who employs over 50 persons will be required to provide the District, upon request, with an Affirmative Action Plan consistent with federal agency guidelines.



### III. PROCEDURAL DIRECTIONS

All proposals shall include, at a minimum, the information shown below in the general format described. The proposal shall be divided into four parts: summary, narrative, budget, appendices. Each is briefly described below.

### (A) Summary

The summary section shall include the proposal title; the name, title, affiliation, address and telephone of the contract officer; a proposal summary of 500 words or less; the period during which the proposal is valid; and the total budget figure.

**(B) Narrative**

The narrative portion should describe the contractor's understanding of the issues and problems in designing the evaluation project, as well as plans for carrying out the project. The narrative portion should be organized into technical and management sections.

The technical section should indicate the contractor's understanding of (a) the issues and needs involved in Massachusetts; (b) the overall scope of the work as well as the specific tasks to be performed; (c) the problems to be anticipated and possible solutions; and (d) the persons, agencies and groups to be involved. It should describe the technical plans for accomplishing the work indicated in this Request and specified in the contractor's proposal.

Specifically, this section should:

- address the special requirements of a long-term study in which immediate gains are differentiated from long-term results.
- show sensitivity to the measurement and effects of “implicit instruction” in contrast to explicit curriculum and materials.

In requesting specific plans, the proposal should include:

- the design of an impact study which will include the different types of analysis necessary to measure achievement gains
- the longitudinal effects of the program on teachers' attitudes and behavior achievement
- the interactional effects of curriculum and instruction style on pupils' achievement
- the effects of organizational changes on teachers' perceptions and effectiveness
- other affective and cognitive changes in pupils' performance, over and above specific basic skills achievement

The management section should include a schedule for the completion of all tasks, progress and quality control procedures, the assignment of staff and staff time to specific tasks together with a description of staff organization and qualifications.

Included in this section, also, may be documentation of the contractor's corporate experience and capability to provide the services and products requested on schedule. Corporate qualifications should briefly describe the support structure adequate for this study as well as indicate experiences similar to those requested by this RFP.





## IV. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Contractors should note the following about products.

- The contracting unit will approve and sign-off on final copy of all project materials.
- Contractors should cite specifications and costs for each of the above in their proposal. Final printing specifications of all deliverables must be approved by July 30, 1984.
- Contractors have the responsibility for preparing, duplicating, and mailing or delivering all products noted above.
- All products will be noted as reports or publications of the district and will not include the name of the contractor. Appropriate acknowledgements will be made by the district.
- The format of the final reports and manuals will follow specifications to be provided by the district (i.e. names of advisory committees and committee members, listing of previous publications, affirmative action statements, Introduction by district, etc.).

### 1. Assessment Measures

- a. The contractor will be responsible for developing an Observation Schedule which will focus on the behaviors that are cited in "Approval Goals and Objectives in Language Development". This schedule should yield quantitative data that can be analyzed by multi-variate techniques, as well as qualitative data that can be used to explain the effects.
- b. The contractor will be responsible for developing a teacher attitude questionnaire that will measure teachers' endorsement of those aspects of the program which the Division and the Advisory Committee deem significant.
- c. The contractor will develop 2 forms of a Mastery test of the Pre-School Language Development Program objectives. The content validity of these forms will be approved by the Advisory Committee.

### 2. Implementation Data

- a. The contractor is responsible for developing a schedule for observation in the schools on a weekly basis. The data collected will be analyzed for possible trends in instructional and attitudinal variables.
- b. Pupils' behavior should be measured for both direct and indirect effects of the program. Specifically, pupils' progress should be reported in terms of achievement in basic skills and in cognitive development, as well as in development of communication skills (i.e., the Pre-School Language Development Mastery tests).

### 3. Analysis

Analysis should include:

- a. evidence for the validity and reliability of the instruments developed
- b. evidence for significant differences in attainment in the targeted groups versus control.
- c. evidence for significant achievement results over time.

### 4. Sample

During the first year, the sample should contain between 120-150 children among the 6 schools that have been chosen for the program. During the second year, a school sample will be included which will be matched to the targeted group in terms of age and ability as measured by the Otis-Lennon Ability Scale.



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- a sufficient number of meetings with the Division personnel (3 staff) during the course of the study
- monthly meeting with project staff to discuss observational reports, changes in policy, etc.
- up to four meetings with the Advisory Committee whose responsibility it is to provide overall advice on the study.

## 6. Printing and Deliverables

Product	Quantity	Delivery Date
Planning Document	330	July 1982
Report on Implementation Schedule	1030	March 1983
Monthly Reports to Project Staff	2	
Interim Report	1030	June 1983
Final Report	5031	August 1984

## PRE-AWARD ASSURANCES OF EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

I hereby certify that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of contractor) complies with all federal and state statutes that require equal opportunity in all aspects of employment irrespective of race, color, sex, religion or national origin. This includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Non-discriminatory recruiting and hiring
- 2) Non-discriminatory placement and promotion
- 3) Non-discriminatory pay, other compensation and working conditions
- 4) Non-discriminatory demotion, transfer, lay-off and termination
- 5) Non-discriminatory subcontracting
- 6) Establishment of a written affirmative action plan pursuant to Department of Education guidelines, if appropriate

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Title

## Sample Contract for a Large Evaluation

This agreement entered into as of this 1st day of July, 1982 by and between the school district of Cosmopolis, hereinafter referred to as the "district," and

Evaluators Anonymous, Inc.  
95 Chi Square  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Hereinafter referred to as the "contractor".

**Whereas**, the design submitted by the contractor for the evaluation of the Pre-School Language Development Program (PLDP) has been modified by negotiation; and,

**Whereas**, the School Board of Cosmopolis approves the recommendation of their negotiation committee to proceed with the evaluation; and

**Whereas**, the contractor is willing to undertake this endeavor;

**Therefore**, the parties do mutually agree as follows:

### 1. Period of Contract

This contract shall be in force from 1 July, 1982 to 31 August, 1984 which time the services agreed to are to have been provided and all products delivered as called for in this contract and in accord with the deadline included herein.

### 2. Scope of Services

The contractor shall perform those services necessary to accomplish the evaluation of the Pre-School Language Development Program in accord with the agreed upon design. Specifically, the contractor shall:

Observe each of the 6 classes for a minimum of 4 hours per month. One half of this observation time will be devoted to the use of the Implementation Schedule which the contractor will develop. The remaining half will be nonstructured. Monthly progress reports will be provided to the project staff.

On 30 March, 1983 the contractor will submit a report on any modification made in the Implementation Observation Schedule, as well as a report on its characteristics. Included in this report will be evidence concerning its objectivity as well as a correlational analysis of the relationship between teacher self-report data and the observation data.

A final report on data collected by use of the schedule will be included in the interim report due on June 1983 and the final report due on 31 August, 1984.

During the second year of the program (1983/84), a control group in each school will be selected. These pupils will be matched in age and ability with the initial sample. They will not participate in the twice weekly Pre-Language Development Program curriculum but will be instructed in the district-wide pre-reading program which is in effect in all district kindergartens.



During the months of September 1982 and May 1983, each student in the experimental group will be administered the Wright Development Test by qualified test administrators employed by the contractor. The test is to be individually administered. Students will receive alternate forms on successive administrations.

The contractor will be responsible for all statistical analysis. Performance of the experimental group will be contrasted with that of the control group using the district-developed test of basic skills and the Pre-School Language Development Mastery Tests.

The contractor will develop two parallel forms of a Mastery test of the Program objectives for administration to the experimental group on three occasions: June 1983, September 1983 and June 1984. The analysis of the resulting data will include the percent of students who have mastered the various objectives at the defined criterion levels. These data are also to be presented so as to permit comparison among classrooms by implementation indices.

The contractor will develop a teacher questionnaire form which will include a section permitting teachers to rate themselves in terms of their implementation of the program. The questionnaire is to be submitted to the Advisory Committee for review by September 15, 1982 and revised after negotiations concerning changes. These questionnaires are to be administered during November 1982 and May 1984. Collection of this questionnaire data will be the responsibility of the school district. The contractor will present frequency and correlational analysis of the questionnaire data in the final evaluation report. During the course of the evaluation, monthly progress reports to the project directors are to be provided. These reports are to be kept confidential.

A technical report on the Implementation Observation Schedule is due in March 1983. Ten copies of this report are to be provided to the school district office.

Interim report of the evaluation is due on 30 June 1983. This report will contain an analysis of the data collected to date. Ten copies will be provided.

The final report is to preserve the confidentiality of all teachers and students as stipulated in this contract.

### 3. Cooperation of the School District

To facilitate the accomplishment of this evaluation, the school district commits itself to undertake and accomplish the following:

The school district will arrange for the classes in the 6 schools to be selected and functioning by 5 September 1982.

The school district will provide the contractor with a schedule of the planned classroom use of the program materials within each participating classroom. This schedule will be updated on a monthly basis to insure adequate observational coverage.

The school district will insure that the contractor has access to the selected classrooms for observational purposes. To promote fidelity of the information obtained, the timing of the contractor's observational visits need not be pre-arranged with the teacher nor the school principal.

The school district will collect and provide to the contractor Mastery Test data for each student in the program. These tests, of which there are two, will be administered to the students during June 1983, September 1983 and May 1984. All mastery test data to be analyzed will be provided to the contractor on keypunched 80 column cards in a mutually agreed upon format.

The school district will keypunch the Wright Development Test data on 80 column cards according to a mutually agreed upon format. These cards will be provided to the contractor within 15 calendar days after the delivery of the information to be keypunched to the school district offices.

The school district will establish an Advisory committee comprised of:

Dr. A. C. Sharpe, the Superintendent of the Cosmopolis School District

Dr. Peter Smith, the Director of Elementary Instruction

Ms. Anne Jones, the Principal of Elementary Instruction

Ms. Paula Roberts, a representative chosen by the districts' kindergarten teachers

Dr. Wendell Beasley, Professor of Educational Psychology, University of Massachusetts

This committee will review the technical report, the teacher questionnaires and the first draft of the final report and return their comments and criticisms to the contractor, within 15 calendar days of receipt. The committee will also serve as the negotiating body for reaching agreement concerning necessary changes in these documents.

#### 4. Additional Contract Provisions

##### A. Non-Discrimination

The contractor agrees that in performing this contract he or she shall not discriminate against any worker, employee or applicant, or any member of the public, because of race, sex, creed, color or national origin, nor otherwise commit an unfair labor practice. The contractor further agrees that this clause will be incorporated in all contracts entered into with suppliers of materials or services, contractors and subcontractors and all labor organizations, furnishing skilled, unskilled and craft union skilled labor, or who may perform any such labor or services in connection with this contract.

##### B. Compliance With Laws

The contractor shall at all times observe and comply with all laws, ordinances and regulations of the federal, state, local and city government, which may in any manner affect the performance of the contract.

##### C. Insurance

The contractor will purchase and maintain during the life of this contract insurance coverage which will satisfactorily insure him against claims and liabilities which could arise because of the execution of this contract.

##### D. Conflict of Interest

No member of the governing body of the City of Cosmopolis or other unit of government and no other officer, employee, or agent of the City or other unit of government who exercise any functions or



responsibilities in connection with the carrying out of the Project to which this contract pertains, shall have any personal interest, direct or indirect, in this contract. The contractor covenants that he presently has no interest and shall not acquire any interest direct or indirect, in the project to which this contract pertains which would conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of his services hereunder. The contractor further covenants that in the performance of this contract no person having any such interest shall be employed.

E. Confidentiality

The contractor agrees to preserve the confidentiality of all subjects participating in this evaluation: no teacher, student or school will be identified or identifiable in the written or oral reports provided to the district or any other party. (The use of fictitious names is permitted in reports to illustrate individual uses if that is deemed a desirable reporting technique).

F. Prior Review

No written report of this evaluation will be released by the contractor to any party without the concurrence of the District Review Committee. The district similarly agrees to secure the approval of the contractor prior to the dissemination of evaluation findings.

G. Other Research Interests

The contractor is free to use the instruments developed for use in this project or the results derived therefrom in other pursuits as long as this use does not violate any other contractual provision.

H. Publication Rights

The contractor is free to publish a report of this evaluation in a professional journal or to present an account at a professional society meeting with the following restrictions:

1. The confidentiality of the district, as well as that of the individuals involved, is preserved.
2. The article or presentation is first submitted to the district for prior approval (see section 4F).

I. Negotiations

In the event of a dispute between the client and the contractor concerning any provision of this contract, the dispute will be submitted to a panel for arbitration. The panel will be comprised of:

Dr. Michael Roberts, Professor of Education, The University of Massachusetts Boston

Dr. Mary Bilbo, Associate Commissioner of Public Instruction, Massachusetts Department of Education

The findings of this panel will not be binding on either party.

J. Termination of Contract

This agreement may be terminated by written mutual consent. In the event of termination the contractor shall be reimbursed for its costs incurred to the date of termination.



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The dates on which products must be delivered and/or major activities must be concluded are shown below:

## 1982/83

- |    |           |  |
|----|-----------|--|
| 1  | July      | ● Contract Agreement   |
| 30 | July      | ● Planning Document  |
| 15 | September | ● Draft of Implementation Questionnaire delivered for review |
| 30 | September | ● Classroom Observation Begins                               |
|    | September | ● Administration of Wright Development Test                  |
|    | November  | ● Administration of Teacher Questionnaire                    |
| 30 | March     | ● Report on Implementation Schedule                          |
| 15 | May       | ● Administration of Wright Development Test                  |
| 15 | June      | ● Administration of the Mastery Test                         |
| 30 | June      | ● Interim Report   |

## 1983/84

- |    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|
| 10 | September | ● Selection of the control group                |
| 15 | September | ● Administration of the Mastery Test            |
|    | May       | ● Administration of Teacher Questionnaire       |
| 15 | May       | ● Administration of the Wright Development Test |
| 1  | June      | ● Administration of the Mastery Tests           |
| 31 | August    | ● Final Report                                  |

The district agrees to pay the sum of \$30,000.00 to the contractor for the conduct of this evaluation. Payment is to be made as follow:

1 July 1982	\$10,000.00
1 May 1983	10,000.00
30 August 1984	10,000.00

The contractor assures the district that the indirect costs charged against this contract will not exceed 20.5% of the direct costs incurred. In the event of contract termination, the contractor will be reimbursed for its costs to the date of termination.

## School District of Cosmopolis

Evaluator's Anonymous, Inc.

By \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **III. CONDUCTING A SMALL EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

For purposes of our discussion, a small external evaluation is one less than \$10,000. In these cases a district may choose to not go through the detailed processes described in Section II of this guide. Many of the same steps would still be followed, however, and we will refer to earlier sections where appropriate.

#### **Selecting the Evaluator**

This section has been divided into two cases: those evaluations \$2,000 to \$10,000, and those evaluations less than \$2,000. School districts need not go out for bid on contracts less than \$2,000 according to Chapter 40 Section 4B of the Massachusetts General Laws.

##### **Evaluations \$2,000 - \$10,000**

A district will probably issue an RFP for this evaluation, but the process may not be as formal or detailed as the one described in Section II of this report. A district can scale down the activities as it sees fit.

It is possible that for this size contract an overall evaluation design has already been decided, perhaps required by program regulation or law or simply determined by the district. An evaluation design is a complete plan of the work required, i.e., data to be collected, groups to be contacted, money available for the evaluation.

Two sample documents are included at the end of this section: a sample RFP and a sample contract. The RFP is an informal version of the typical RFP. The major point of sending it is to ascertain contractors willing to do the work. The district is then likely to choose an evaluator amongst those willing, on the basis of the training and experience of the consulting staff who would be conducting the evaluation. This is a suggested approach although a district could again be as formal or informal in selecting the evaluator as it chooses.

The sample contract also is a simpler version of the contract in Section II of this report. It includes the necessary elements of a good working contract and is useful for any contract \$10,000 or less. (The example happens to be for one for \$3,000).

##### **Contracts less than \$2,000**

For proposals less than \$2,000 a school district need not go out for bid and issue an RFP. Chapter 40 Section 4B of the General Laws, allows them this discretion. The school district could issue an RFP but would expect a very small response from contractors unless a special effort was made to find individual evaluators in need of work. It “costs” contractors time and money to respond to an RFP (typing, writing, mailing costs) and would in general not find it worth their while to respond to such a small contract.

In this case, a district might directly contact an evaluator to offer the contractor the work. Assuming the evaluator is free to do the work, after it has been explained to the contractor, the school district and the contractor should meet to discuss the evaluation and work out a contract.

While much of the initial communication between the district and contractor is in the form of a “gentlemen’s agreement,” it is still important for the district to have worked out in writing just what the evaluation will entail. The questions listed in this report for writing an RFP are helpful here (Refer to page 2). This information is helpful to the evaluator so that both parties have the same expectations about the content of the evaluation. It is also useful in writing the contract.

A major consideration in hiring a contractor this way is how to maintain the credibility and the objectivity of the evaluation report so there is no apparent conflict of interest. A school district should have the utmost confidence in the work of the evaluator through previous direct work completed for the district or from references the school district has recently contacted.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluating the Evaluation Contract**

##### **Monitoring**

Monitoring an evaluation contract is an essential part of the evaluation manager’s job. For a discussion of monitoring refer to page 9 of this report which describes monitoring a large evaluation contract. All of the discussion there is pertinent to monitoring a small evaluation contract. Even if there is no formal RFP or formal Contract Management Plan, a district should consider writing less formal documents, in the form of



memos between the contractor and district, to cover these topics. It is still important to have expectations mutually agreed upon and in writing.

**Evaluating**

A school district should have a plan to evaluate the quality of contract work. For a discussion of evaluation see page 9 of this report, which describes evaluation of a large contract. While the discussion is relevant here, with the small evaluation the feedback to evaluators may be informal (verbal) rather than formal. Feedback is important but the district will have to weigh the administrative costs involved in formalizing this feedback.

**Non-Compliance Procedures**

See page 12 of this report for this discussion.

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The Cosmopolis Public Schools will require the services of an outside evaluator for a new Title VII Bilingual Education Project. The school system is notifying a number of possible consultants and soliciting their interests in providing this service. This form may be completed and returned to indicate your interest and to indicate the amount of funds which you are requesting for this service. The evaluation design within the project has been approved and is subject to change and improvement by mutual agreement between the project director and the outside evaluation consultant. The highlights of the services of the outside evaluator are attached.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, we are not interested.

The resumes giving the training and experience of our staff who would be assigned to this project, are attached.

(City, State, Zip)

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## Sample Contract for a Small Evaluation

### 2. Sample Contract for a Small Evaluation

#### AGREEMENT

This agreement is made the first of July, 1982, and entered into by and between the School District of Cosmopolis, Massachusetts, hereinafter called the district, and Evaluators Anonymous, Inc., hereinafter called the contractor.

#### 1.0 Purpose

The district requires the services of the contractor as authorized and budgeted in the approved Early Childhood Act P.L. 99-999, grant No. ABC123. The district and the contractor mutually agree to carry out activities below that will result in the evaluation of the Pre-School Language Development Program (PLDP).

#### 2.0 The contractor will:

- 2.1 Meet with project staff to review and possibly modify the evaluation design.
- 2.2 Develop assessment instruments, questionnaires, etc.
- 2.3 Visit project schools monthly and meet with project staff.
- 2.4 Collect, tabulate and analyze data with assistance from project director.
- 2.5 Prepare an interim report by February 15, 1983, and a final evaluation report by July 30, 1983.

#### 3.0 The district will:

- 3.1 Administer the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test, the Prueba de Lectura, and Test de Distrezas Basics to all their and Fourth Grade students.
- 3.2 Provide the evaluator with a list of students who meet the criteria and with the names and addresses of these students' parents or guardians.
- 3.3 Arrange for the equivalent of one day per week of the Home/School Liaison Worker's time to be released to the project.
- 3.4 Cooperate with the evaluator in arranging for the collection of the necessary data.
- 3.5 Meet and cooperate with the evaluator for project review and the improvement of project activities.
- 3.6 Provide the sum of \$3,000 to the contractor for the conduct of the evaluation.

#### 4.0 Conditions

- 4.1 The period of performance shall be from July 1, 1982 to July 30, 1983.
- 4.2 This shall be fixed price contract in the amount of \$3,000.00 for the performance of work stipulated in paragraphs 2.1 through 2.5.
- 4.3 Three copies of the final report shall be delivered to the district. All materials issued from this evaluation will remain the property of the district.
- 4.4 The payment schedule to the contractor will be as follows:

November 1, 1982 (Conclusion of 5 work days)	\$1000.00
February 15, 1983 (Conclusion of 8 work days)	\$1000.00
Acceptance of Final Report on or about July 30, 1983	\$1000.00



4.5 This agreement may be terminated by written mutual consent. In the event of termination the contractor shall be reimbursed for its cost incurred to the date of termination.

School District of Cosmopolis

Evaluators Anonymous, Inc.

By \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Approved to appropriation: \$3,000.00 5-912-8019**

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Target Population:	90% of the limited English proficient students identified by the language assessment battery (Spanish) to be performing at or below the third stanine
Desired Behavior:	will increase their acquisition of concepts and skills through their native language
Performance Level:	by a statistically significant increase in raw scores
Operational Condition:	provided they receive supplementary instruction at least 150 school days
Instrument:	Prueba de Lectura and Test de Distrezas Basicas

General Technique:	group administered standardized test
Baseline Data:	October
Sample Group(s):	randomly selected population (N = 10% of total TBE population)
Collection Dates:	October and June
Data Analysis:	pre-post analysis

monthly analysis of data

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**Target Population:**

**Desired Behavior:**

### Performance Level:

### Operational Condition:

**Instrument:**

### General Technique:

### Baseline Data:

**Sample Group(s):**

**Collection Dates:**

### Data Analysis:

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## Appendix A

### Program Evaluation Standards

The following standards were developed in Spring 1982 by the Department of Education Program Evaluation Committee, a group of staff representing all major units in the Department. These evaluation standards provide general principals for the conduct and use of evaluation studies completed by Department staff or monitored by Department staff. The focus is on determining the process, purpose and scope of evaluations, and on reporting evaluation results. The standards are general goals for evaluation and cover all types of evaluation studies, small to large, internal and external, formative and summative. Because of limited resources of programmatic requirements, however, not all standards would apply to a particular evaluation.

This material is adapted from and relies heavily on materials developed nationally by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation published in *Standards for Evaluations of Educational Programs, Projects and Materials*.

#### Utility Standards

Utility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will serve the practical information needs of given audiences.

##### *Audience Identification*

The audiences involved in or affected by the evaluation should be identified so that their needs can be addressed.

- Key audiences who will use or be affected by the evaluation should be identified prior to the evaluation.
- The evaluation audience should not be too general or diverse.

##### *Evaluator Credibility*

The persons conducting the evaluation should be trustworthy and competent to perform the evaluation, so that findings achieve maximum credibility and acceptance.

- The evaluator should exhibit professional and technical competence demonstrated through training, experience, integrity and public relations skills.
- The client should determine that the evaluation plan is realistic and technically sound. A review panel may be used for this purpose. The review panel may consist of program or project administrators, teachers, technical experts, etc.

##### *Information Scope and Selection*

Information collected should be of sufficient scope and selected appropriately to address pertinent questions about the object of the evaluation and be responsive to the needs and interests of specified audiences.

- Questions to be addressed should be relevant to the evaluation purposes, clearly specified, and agreed upon by the client, evaluator, and as appropriate, other affected audiences.
- Evaluation plans should include a mechanism for providing periodic progress reports. This may take the form of a review panel.

##### *Interpretation of Findings*

There should be prior agreement between appropriate parties on the perspective, procedures, and rationale used to interpret the findings, so that the bases for judgments are clear.

- Evaluation approaches should be clearly defined and justified.
- Evaluation plans should reasonably allow for additional or unexpected variables.
- Evaluation plans should specify individuals or groups who will collect and interpret findings, i.e., teachers will administer tests, scoring service will score tests, data will be analyzed by contractor, etc.

##### *Report Clarity*

The evaluation report should describe the program/project being evaluated and its context, purposes, procedures and findings of the evaluation, so that the specified audiences will readily understand what was

done, why it was done, what information was obtained, what conclusions were drawn, and what recommendations were made.

- Evaluation reports should include a concise summary that clearly explains the purpose, methodology, limitations, findings and recommendations.
- Evaluation reports should address the key evaluation questions, findings, and study limitations.

#### *Report Dissemination*

Timely evaluation findings that encourage use and follow-through should be provided to clients and other key audiences.

- Evaluation plans should include time lines for all reports, including progress reports, for maximum audience usage.
- Evaluation plans should allow for essential revisions of the time lines without sacrificing technical accuracy or report deadlines.
- Evaluation should include suggestions for follow-through by audiences who will assess the findings and implement the recommendations.
- Evaluation reports should be presented to and reviewed by the client prior to dissemination.
- Evaluation summaries with recommendations should be provided to all specified audiences so that they can assess and use findings.

### **Feasibility Standards**

Feasibility standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation plan is practical, politically viable and cost effective for the program/project setting.

#### *Practical Procedures*

The evaluation procedures should be practical, so that disruption is kept to a minimum and that necessary information can be obtained.

- The plan for data collection instruments and procedures should be reviewed by people who have experience in collecting data and by those administrators, teachers, or others who would be providing data.
- Determine if any data needed for study is already available so that new data collection efforts will not be redundant.
- Data collection should be coordinated with other comparable data collection activities occurring within the same time period.
- Overall data collection efforts for the school year should be scheduled so as to minimize information requests.

#### *Political Viability*

The evaluation should be planned and conducted with the participation and cooperation of various interest groups.

- Representatives from key constituent groups could be consulted initially and periodically to provide suggestions and react to certain aspects of the evaluation such as, determining design, selecting a contractor, reviewing instruments, analyzing results, and planning dissemination strategies.
- Periodic information on the progress of the evaluation study should be provided to key constituent groups.

#### *Cost Effectiveness*

The evaluation should produce information of sufficient value to justify the resources expended.

- Analyze the financial and human costs against the benefits to be derived and select the best combination of costs and benefits.
- Evaluations should be conducted economically.



## **Propriety Standards**

Propriety standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation and affected by the results.

### *Formal Obligation*

The obligations of the formal parties to an evaluation (what is to be done, for what purpose, how, by whom and when) should be agreed to in writing.

- Be sure all major components are part of a written agreement, i.e., the questions to be investigated, data analysis, reporting plan, etc.
- Ensure that the written agreement conforms to federal, state and program requirements for expenditures, privacy, evaluation and reporting.
- Negotiate amendments to the written agreement as the work proceeds if it is necessary to change the scope of the work, cost, and/or timetable.

### *Full and Frank Disclosure*

Oral and written evaluations should be open, direct and honest in their disclosure of pertinent findings, including the limitations of the evaluations.

### *Public's Right to Know*

The formal parties to an evaluation should respect and assure the public's right to know, within the limits of other related principles and statutes, such as those dealing with public safety and right to privacy. The Department will make available legal information relating to the public's right to know, privacy, civil and human rights, public safety.

### *Rights of Human Subjects*

The evaluation should be designed and conducted so that the rights, welfare and dignity of human subjects are respected and protected.

- The Department will make available state and federal laws on the rights of human subjects, such as those related to participation, the privilege of withdrawing, health and safety protection, and privacy of information.
- Be sure that necessary written permissions are obtained, and guarantees for anonymity to individuals are assured.

### *Conflict of Interest*

Conflict of interest should be approached openly and honestly so it does not compromise the evaluation process and/or results.

- In initial discussions with potential evaluators, identify and describe possible sources of conflict of interest.
- Consider setting a maximum number of consecutive years for which an evaluator may evaluate the same program or project.

### *Balanced Reporting*

The evaluation should be complete and fair in its presentation of strengths and weaknesses of the program or project under investigation, so that strengths can be built upon and problem areas addressed.

- For ongoing or recurrent programs, the new proposal should reflect the findings of previous program evaluations.

### *Fiscal Responsibility*

The evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures and otherwise be prudent and ethically responsible.

- Contractors should maintain accurate records of sources of funding and expenditures in a clear and recognized format.
- A well defined budget should be included in the formal contract agreement.



- The Department will make available laws and rules on approved state and federal accounting procedures which must be followed whenever evaluations are contracted.

## **Accuracy Standards**

Accuracy standards are intended to ensure that an evaluation is truthful or valid in what it says about a program, project, or materials.

### *Identifying the Program, Project, or Materials*

The program, project, or materials of the evaluation should be clearly identified and realistically examined in terms of personnel, cost, procedures, location, facilities, goals, objectives, potential side effects, etc.

### *Context Analysis*

The evaluation should describe the contextual influences on the program, project, or materials including the geographic location of the program or project, timing, political and social climate, the nature of the staff, and pertinent economic conditions.

### *Described Purposes and Procedures*

The purposes and procedures of the evaluation should be described in sufficient detail so that they can be identified and monitored by both the evaluator and the client to ensure that the intended purposes of the evaluation are being met.

- The evaluation report should describe a study's objectives, intended uses, and ways in which information was gathered, organized and analyzed.

### *Defensible Information Sources*

The sources of information should be described so that the accuracy of the information can be assessed.

- The evaluation report should describe the sources of information, including the criteria and methods used to select them, while still preserving the confidentiality of the sources.

### *Valid and Reliable Measurement*

The information-gathering instruments and procedures should be chosen or developed and implemented in a manner that will assure that the interpretation is valid and the information obtained is reliable for its intended use. A valid instrument is one that is being used and interpreted in an appropriate way. A reliable instrument has proven it consistently measures the characteristics being investigated.

- Evaluation reports should clearly describe the procedures used to ensure valid and reliable measurement procedures.
- Evaluation reports should state the data collected and the results of the analyses performed to determine the validity and reliability of measurement instrument developed for a study.

### *Systematic Data Control*

The data collected, processed and reported in an evaluation should be reviewed and quality control measures implemented so that the results of evaluation will not be flawed.

- In conducting an evaluation study, steps should be taken to ensure that all data used will be as error-free as is humanly possible. A systematic program of training, controls, and accuracy checks should be instituted.

### *Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis*

Quantitative and qualitative information in an evaluation should be appropriately and systematically analyzed to ensure supportable interpretation.

- An analytic procedure should be selected that is appropriate to the questions addressed in the study. For example, the results of certain data analysis should be tested to insure that those results are statistically significant events rather than chance occurrences.
- The evaluation report should indicate potential weaknesses in the data collection or analysis and describe their possible influence on conclusions.

### *Justified Conclusions*

The conclusions of an evaluation should be explicitly justified so that the audience can assess them.

- The conclusions in an evaluation report must be defensible, i.e., based on sound logic and appropriate information.
- The conclusions in an evaluation report must be defended, i.e., reported along with an account of the procedures, information and underlying assumptions and with a discussion of possible alternative findings and why they were rejected.

### *Objective Reporting*

The evaluation procedures should provide safeguards to protect the evaluation findings and reports against distortion by the personal feelings and biases of any party to the evaluation. Evaluation reports should be based on facts selected through impartial methods and not slanted to promote biased positions.

